

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this Bible study series you may learn to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. Two teachers will do Bible study together about one important aspect of being a disciple of Jesus Christ. We will use a very easy Bible study method called the five steps method. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. The second series of 6 Bible studies is about 6 important relationships: Christian love, Christian friendship, the Christian men-woman relationship, the Christian marriage relationship, the Christian parent-child relationship and unequal yoke-relationships. Today's Bible study is: A DISCIPLE REJECTS UNEQUAL YOKE-RELATIONSHIPS. The fundamental question is "WHAT ARE UNEQUAL YOKE-RELATIONSHIPS?"

(S) **STEP 1. READ**

Let us read 2 Corinthians 6:14 – 7:1. Let us take turns to read one verse each.

(T) Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? (S) What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? (T) What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people." (S) "Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you." (T) "I will be a Father to you and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." (S) Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.

(T) **STEP 2. DISCOVER**

Let us discover and discuss some important truths in this Bible passage. "Which truth in this passage is important for you?" or "Which truth in this passage touches your mind or heart?" Think and write your answer in your notebook. After a few minutes take turns to share your discoveries with one another.

(S) An important truth for me is in 2 Corinthians 6:14, which says, "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers" In the original language of the New Testament, the verb literally says, "*Do not go on and on and on being unequally yoked together with unbelievers.*" The implication is that some Christians in the church at Corinth were already being unequally yoked together with unbelievers. The apostle Paul commands these Christians to no longer continue these compromising situations! Because I live among non-Christians all the time, I must evaluate my personal life to see if I am unequally yoked together with unbelievers in some area of my life. I must stop every compromising situation or compromising relationship!

(T) An important truth for me is in 2 Corinthians 6:17, which says, "Therefore, come out from them and be separate, says the Lord." In the original language of the New Testament, the verbs literally say, "*You must immediately come out from among the unbelievers and you must definitely be separate from the unbelievers*". Again the implication was that some Christians in the church at Corinth were still continuing in their compromising situations. The apostle Paul commands them to make a once for all time and a definite or final break with their compromising situations. Christians are definitely forbidden to have certain kinds of relationships and also forbidden to be involved in certain kinds of activities! Because Christians live among non-Christians all the time, I must teach the Christians which relationships and activities are forbidden for Christians.

(S) **STEP 3. QUESTION**

Let us try to understand all the truths in this passage and ask our questions about the things we still do not understand. "Which question about anything in this passage would you like to ask?" Think and write your question in your notebook. Then discuss the questions and try to find answers.

1st Question. What is a "yoke"?

(T) The yoke here is a "double-yoke" under which two animals work side by side, for example, binding two bullocks together that are pulling a cart. It is an instrument that couples or binds two animals together, so that they will go in the same direction, make the same movements, walk at the same pace, stop at the same time and generally do everything in synchronisation. If one animal strays from a straight line, the other will be pulled in that direction. If one animal slows down and stops, he forces the other animal to also slow down and stop. If the two animals try to follow two different leaders, they will be tugging and pushing each other to go their separate ways and thus hinder every kind of progress.

The apostle Paul had the words of Deuteronomy 22:10 in mind, which says, "Do not plough with an ox and a donkey yoked together." He adapts and applies this principle with the purpose of emphasising the incongruity of believers being paired with unbelievers. A Christian who is yoked together with a non-Christian is going to

experience how the non-Christian pulls him away from the right path of God, slows down his growth and even forces him to stop believing altogether.

2nd question. What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?

(S) The believer has certain things in common with the unbeliever. For example, both eat the same food, wear the same clothes, ride on the same bus and use the same kind of money. Etc. However, there are specific things that are peculiar to unbelievers, from which Christ has separated Christians. For example, the life of the unbeliever is centred on himself, while the life of the believer is centred on Christ. The treasure of the non-Christian is on earth, while the treasure of the Christian is in heaven. The values of the non-Christian are the values of this world, while the values of the Christian are those of the world that is to come. The unbeliever seeks the glory of man, while the believer seeks the glory of God. Thus, with regard to such things as these, the direction of life, the purpose of life, and the values in life, etc Christians and non-Christians have nothing in common.

3rd question. What are some examples of “yoke-relationships” that the Bible forbids?

(T) In 1 Corinthians 5:9-11 Paul says, “I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people - not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave the world. But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat.” The Bible commands Christians that they may not associate with name Christians who behave like non-Christians. Thus, a Christian may *not pull in the same “social yoke”* together with a name-Christian who behaves like a non-Christian.

(S) In 1 Corinthians 6:5-6 Paul says, “I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers? But instead, one brother goes to law against another - and this in front of unbelievers!” The Bible commands Christians that they should not take their legal disputes before non-Christian judges. When a Christian has a legal dispute with another Christian, they should allow wise Christians in the church to judge their dispute. If the dispute cannot be resolved, it is better to accept suffering of loss and leave the final judgement in the hands of God. Thus, a Christian may *not pull in the same “legal yoke”* together with a non-Christian.

(T) In 1 Corinthians 7:39 Paul says, “A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord.” The Bible commands Christians that they may only marry another Christian. A Christian is regarded as somebody who really “belongs to the Lord”, that is, the Lord lives in him or her through his Holy Spirit and actively guides his or her life. 2 Corinthians 6:14 clearly says that a believer may not be unequally yoked to an unbeliever. A Christian may only marry with another Christian. This conclusion has consequences also for all other intimate relationships, whether between men and women or between people of the same gender. Actually becoming *intimate* friends with a non-Christian is a dangerous thing. When friends become close, they are sharing deeper thoughts and feelings that will stay in their minds for a very long time. They begin to depend on each other and influence each other deeply. However, an intimate friendship relationship between a Christian and a non-Christian will become like a “unequal yoke” relationship. In such a relationship, the Christian cannot simply ignore the non-Christian’s desires, values and goals. He will be pulled down by the non-Christian to worldly desires, values and goals. Whatever the non-Christian believes will influence the Christian’s faith and behaviour. Because meeting a person of the opposite sex with a view to marriage is such an intimate relationship, a Christian may also not meet a person of the opposite sex in any kind of intimate relationship. A Christian should not go out alone (“date”) with a non-Christian. Some Christians say, “But if I marry this non-Christian, then I will lead him or her to Christ. Isn’t that pleasing to God?” No, this is not pleasing to God, because God clearly forbids this in 1 Corinthians 7:39 and in 2 Corinthians 6:14. God also asks, “How do you know whether you will save this other person?” (1 Corinthians 7:16). The God who alone saves people is also the God who forbids unequal yoke-relationships! Therefore, a Christian may *not pull in the same “marriage yoke” or any “intimate yoke”* (“dating” yoke) together with a non-Christian. It will be a very sad day, when you leave Jesus Christ for the sake of any temporary human friendship. It would not be any better if your non-Christian friend decided to become a Christian just to please you or to follow Christ half-heartedly just to please you. Your friendship will suffer in either way. Although nothing is impossible for God, we must be wise and obey what God has commanded. God commands us not to be unequally yoked to a non-believer, because he really has our happiness in mind.

(S) In 1 Corinthians 10:7 Paul says, “Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: “The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry.” The Bible forbids Christians to join non-Christians in pagan revelry. These “religious and cultural parties” were characterised by excessive indulgence and lack of self-discipline. 1 Peter 4:3-5 and Ephesians 5:3-5 teach that people were eating too much food and drinking too much alcohol. Often wild dancing, loud music, shouting and coarse joking accompanied them. The people committed acts of lust, idolatry or occultism. Thus, a Christian may *not pull in the same “wild party yoke”* together with non-Christians.

(T) Let me summarise *the unlawful yoke-relationships* that are described in the Bible. Unlawful yoke-relationships with unbelievers are all close relationships with unbelievers in which *Christian harmony* cannot be expected to flourish. They are all close relationships with unbelievers in which Christian principles are compromised.

4th question. Are there other unequal yoke-relationships that are forbidden for Christians?

(S) Yes. This teaching in the Bible is applicable today to all areas that involve intimate or close relationships with non-Christians. For example.

One. A Christian should not go out alone (“date”) with a non-Christian of the opposite gender.

Two. A Christian should not have a business partnership with a non-Christian. A Christian may be employed by a non-Christian, as long as he does not do things that are forbidden by God. However, an unlawful business partnership would be a partnership between a Christian and a non-Christian in which both invest money and in which decisions and responsibilities are shared. Such situations could lead to the non-Christian believing in giving and receiving bribes or cheating in business, and thus involve the Christian unwittingly in the consequences of his evil deeds.

Three. A Christian school should not employ a non-Christian teacher in the Christian school.

Four. A Christian should not join a church where the Bible is not regarded as the infallible word of God. A Christian should not receive instruction from another Christian who does not regard the Bible as trustworthy and as the absolute authority for human thought and behaviour.

Five. A Christian should not get unequally yoked to non-Christian values and habit forming activities, like watching the wrong TV programmes, reading the wrong books and magazines, going to the wrong clubs, etc. A Christian should stay away from any source that portrays Christian values as boring or outdated and that exalts anti-Christian values.

5th question. What should a Christian do if he is still unequally yoked together with unbelievers in some area of his life?

(T) He should do what 2 Corinthians 6:17 commands, “Come out from them and be separate.” The negative command, “do not be unequally yoked together with an unbeliever” carries with it the opposite and positive command, “Come out from them and be separate.” Christians should get equally yoked together with other Christians and pull in the same direction, encourage and help one another in the faith and serve together in unity. Christians should get equally yoked together with Christians in marriage, in service and in public witnessing.

(S) **STEP 4. APPLY**

After brainstorming with one another and recording a list of **possible applications**, consider which possible application does God want you to turn into a **personal application**.

(T) I will faithfully teach that a Christian may only meet another person of the opposite gender with a view to marriage when that person is also a Christian. A Christian may only marry another Christian. Your prospective marriage partner must really know and love the Lord Jesus Christ. In the area of marriage, a Christian may never get unequally yoked to a non-Christian.

(S) I especially want to be careful what kind of books, magazines and newspapers I read. I do not want to defile my thoughts and heart with the values, imaginations and desires of the non-Christian world. In the area of values and habit-forming activities, I will not get unequally yoked with the non-Christian world.

(T) **STEP 5. PRAY**

Let us take turns to pray about one truth that God has taught us in 2 Corinthians 6:14 – 7:1.

Dear Father in heaven, make me very determined to faithfully teach the truth in the Bible that a Christian should never get involved in a close and intimate relationship with a non-Christian. Please guide unmarried Christians to genuine other Christians with a view to marriage.

(S) Dear Father in heaven, make me watchful and careful about what I read. Help me to quickly discern what is good to read and what is not good. Give me a clean heart and a dedicated will to fill my life with what is holy and true and beautiful. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

(T) **ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Consider all your relationships. If you still have an unequal yoke relationship with an unbeliever, then come out of that relationship!

Second. Prepare next week’s Bible study from Genesis 1:24 – 2:3. Join a house fellowship that does Bible study. See the workbooks “Go and make disciples” and Internet on www. Etc

Third. Listen on short wave radio every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY to “Discipleship training on the air”.